

The Principle of Montage and Literature: Fragmented Subjectivity as the Subject-matter in Novel, Film and in Digital Forms of Narration

Darko Štrajn

Educational Research Institute (Pedagoški inštitut), Gerbičeva 62, SI-1000 Ljubljana
darko.strajn@guest.arnes.si

This article proceeds from a discussion of Döblin's novel Berlin Alexanderplatz and its adaptation in a 1931 film and a 1980 TV series. It takes into account Benjamin's remark about the novel, which is based on the principle of montage. This principle in pluralist settings in today's world of interplay between constructed realities operates not just through artistic practices, but through a whole complex of various communication, information, and presentations.

Keywords: literature and film / montage / de-montage / subjectivity / Benjamin, Walter / German literature / Döblin, Alfred / *Berlin Alexanderplatz* / film adaptations / Fassbinder, Rainer Werner

Introduction

“Real montage is based on the document” (Benjamin, “Krisis” 232). What does Benjamin mean by this sentence? This statement is a singular notional crystallization in the intersection between literature and film, and it emerged in the context of a specific encounter between Walter Benjamin as a theoretician and Alfred Döblin as a writer.¹ Benjamin's sentence was articulated as part of his review of Döblin's novel, which was quite over-ambitiously titled “The Crisis of the Novel.” What are the attributes of the “document” that determines montage? Definitions of the word *document* (which originated in thirteenth-century France) in various dictionaries more or less consistently relate writing to terms such as *evidence*, *proof*, and *reality*. Considering the entire intellectual milieu of the Weimar Republic, in which the novel was written and published, Benjamin's use of the term *document* should be read as a semantic link to the notion of reality within *Neue Sachlichkeit*² movement and to the connotations of film as an art that

has a strong impact on reality. Hence, film is a “document” that has a special power to represent or modify objective reality. One should also recall the attitude toward daily life and art articulated in the Dada movement and in *Neue Sachlichkeit*, distancing them from Expressionism and opposing the notions of highbrow artwork. Thus there is a double explanation for Benjamin's sentence: *montage* has to do with evidence of reality and, in the case of the novel *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, the origin of the montage principle unmistakably has to be found in film. Therefore, Döblin's novel should be taken as a clear expression of a mutual relationship between literature and film, which was inevitably bound to happen. Indeed, it also happened in a variety of modes and within many individual novels by various authors such as Heinrich Mann, Joyce, and Dos Passos, to name just a few. Considering Benjamin's essay “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” written a few years later, on the role of reproduction as a founding notion of mass culture of the twentieth century, it can be assumed that Benjamin's review of Döblin's novel points towards the divide within the notion of culture and aesthetics (meaning the divide between “auratic” art and mass reproduced art), which was established by this most influential text by Benjamin. In the setting of industrial society, film and literature become entangled within the same field of entirely transformed aesthetic perception and production. The kind of perception addressed here has been described by Benjamin as “distracted perception” (239).

All kinds of paradoxes of realities of social and moral spheres were inscribed in the aesthetic paradigms of the traditional novel; illusions and phantasmatic constructions, represented through characters of narratives, manifested and expressed subjectivity, which can be discerned at multiple discursive levels: from the philosophical “post-Hegelian” Marxist abstract notions of *das Subjekt* to existentialist and post-structuralist concepts of subjectivity and objectivity. The crisis of the novel as a form became evident when the subjectivity philosophically—not legally or socially—ceased to function as a definable central agency in the real world of the bourgeois system. What else but a new and powerful reflection of the world in moving pictures could have had such an impact as to reinvigorate and transform the very form of the novel, which now had to deal with decentered subjectivity? The encounter between Döblin and Benjamin as well as the interaction between Döblin's novel and film in the mode of “moving pictures” can be taken as one of many indicative points from which the literary text and moving pictures could no longer be considered separately.

Döblin's hesitant acceptance of film

No matter how much Döblin considered some of his later works more important, literary scholarship and the reading public view *Berlin Alexanderplatz* as the peak of Döblin's work. It is more or less agreed that Döblin was involved in the currents of various reactions to what is known as German Expressionism. However, discussion is then open on the extent to which the novel itself conforms to the paradigm of Expressionism, which is mostly described in terms reminiscent of some basic aspects of the definition of Expressionism, as in Steven Brockman's assertion: "Whereas Impressionism seeks to accurately record the play of light and color in the outside world, eschewing sharp contours and favoring gentle transitions, curves, and blurring, Expressionism seeks access to an interior world characterized by garish and unnatural colors, jagged lines, and sharp distinctions between color spheres" (49–50).

Döblin himself—not really opposing the label *Expressionism*—defined his writing as "epic fiction." Obviously, his work differed from the intellectual currents of the time, although it somehow simultaneously conversed and interacted with them. It is no accident that Benjamin brings Dadaism into his discussion of Döblin, which through its "fanatical battle against artwork has made use of it in order to ally itself with everyday life" (Benjamin, "Krisis" 232–233). This assertion points towards the entire background of *Neue Sachlichkeit* in its emergence from Expressionism and challenging it as it points towards rich dialogues and polemics of the time, involving some of the greatest intellectual authorities of the twentieth century such as Lukács and Brecht.

Döblin's own writings on the relation between literature and film show that his position changed over time. Erich Kleinschmidt goes a bit too far in his claim that "[t]he often-repeated allusion to Döblin's 'filmic writing style' must therefore be refuted. It originates with contemporary critics of *Berlin Alexanderplatz* and has been repeated ever since" (167). Kleinschmidt does not mention Benjamin in his article, and so it can be assumed that Benjamin's emphasis on the montage aspect reaches beyond the simple direct and non-reflexive concept of a novel as a narration mirroring cinema. In addition, Kleinschmidt himself contradicts his own assertion because on the same page of the text he realizes that "Döblin's reserved relation to film changed around 1930, along with his changing conception of literature. In place of a rather elitist conception of art, Döblin now wanted to reach a broader mass audience." Benjamin's claim about the role of montage as the "principle" that affected the narration style of the novel thus envisaged a change in Döblin's position on film. Thus, it can conclusively

be said that Döbblin indirectly acknowledged the filmic effect in his writing retrospectively; at the same time, this retrospective acceptance was helped by the emergence of sound film because Döbblin, reportedly in his early comments on cinema, perceived the absence of the spoken word in films as an impediment to film as a full-blown art.

Montage and de-montage

Walter Benjamin presented Döbblin's principal novel *Berlin Alexanderplatz* in his essay "Krisis des Romans" in a very condensed manner. In spite of this, there is no doubt that he was one of the first theoreticians to determine some fundamental concepts for reading Döbblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz*. The discourse of the review of the novel moves through interdisciplinary fields (as one could say nowadays) such as comparative literature and cultural analysis. There are statements and opinions in the review that should be read together with Benjamin's *Arcades Project*. Howard Caygill rightly connects the project to Benjamin's reflection on the "epic," "... whether the epic theatre of Brecht and the epic novels of Victor Hugo and Döbblin, or the anti-epics of Kafka and Baudelaire. The various themes are brought together in the genealogy of modern urban experience as the destruction of tradition undertaken in the *Arcades Project*" (64). Benjamin's inspiration for simultaneous poetic and theoretical descriptions of the complexities of urban experience in the *Arcades Project* must have been Döbblin's novel. Hence, Benjamin's *city reading*³—which obviously mingles with Döbblin's travels through the various urban and social layers of Berlin of the 1920s, as sensed through Franz Biberkopf, the antihero of the novel—reveals the economic and political realities of the structure of Berlin's urban environment. Bourdieu developed the concept of social (and symbolic) space decades later through his reflexive sociological conceptual appropriations of complexities of modern society. Bourdieu's notion of social space incorporates basic aspects of meaning that I have tried to present above: "This space is defined by a more or less narrow correspondence between a certain order of coexistence (or of distribution) of agents and a certain coexistence (or distribution) of properties. Consequently, there is nobody that is not characterized by place, where he is situated more or less in a permanent manner" (162). The aspect of urbanity has a structuring role because it is inscribed in the constituting movements of individuals as represented by characters of the novel. "Döbblin's epic unites collective experience of a place—Alexanderplatz—with the fate of an individual character, Franz Biberkopf. The place forms the locus of the epic, dissolving

the solitude of the individual character into a reflex of urban experience” (Caygill 71).

As he indicates in the text of his review, Döblin's lecture at the Prussian Academy of Arts in 1929 made a strong impression on Benjamin. Under the spell of this lecture, he contrasted Döblin's “epic fiction” with André Gide's idea of *roman pur*. Although Döblin knew about and was very impressed by James Joyce, Benjamin insisted that it was unnecessary to operate with artistic expressions (*Kunstausrücken*), or to talk about *dialogue interieur*, or recall Joyce while considering *Berlin Alexanderplatz*: “Actually this is something different. The stylistic principle of this book is montage. Petit bourgeois leaflets, scandalous stories, misfortunes, sensation from 28, popular songs, and advertisements sprinkle this text. The principle of montage explodes the *novel*, its form and its style, and it opens up new, very epic possibilities, mostly with regard to form” (232). It seems that Benjamin's methodological materialism, “hidden” behind his unique theoretical articulations—a kind of revealing insightful descriptivism—generated such reading of the novel that transcends aesthetics, but retains it at the same time in a sense of the Hegelian *Aufhebung*. Benjamin's singular attitude is characterized by his inexplicit philosophical discourse. He actually never really enters problems such as subject-object relations, transcendentalism, speculations, and so forth in explicit philosophical terms, but his writing nonetheless addresses these problems. Perhaps Benjamin's shunning of explicit philosophy prevented him from taking a step further in defining Döblin's novel as a work of montage. Taking into account the notion of *das Subjekt* as a fundamental concept could make it possible for Benjamin to see Döblin's montage as *de-montage*⁴ simultaneously, reflecting the decentering of subjectivity as an agency and shattering its “outcomes” in a form of crushed (psychological) subjectivity. However, the process of de-montage, obvious only as the “hidden” and constitutive movement in Döblin's novel, surfaces only much later in Fassbinder's adaptation of the novel in his 1980 TV series.

Nonetheless, the most relevant aspect in Benjamin's reading remains his elucidatory linking of Döblin's novel to the logic of cinematic production, including the notion of *montage*. Comprehension of the text as “directly” linked to reality is facilitated by Döblin's category of *epic fiction*. This category obviously forms a link with the Brechtian category of *epic theatre*, in which the famous *V-effekt* confronts a spectator with a reality, say, of class exploitation or repressive domination. Döblin's narration style transfers Brecht's idea into the form of a novel and so it gives even a naive reader the chance to take part in an interplay of identification linkages. In this respect, the notion of de-montage would also function well: the characters

of the novel keep building and taking themselves apart. Their identities, relations, and subjectively suggested “appearances” are crumbling as much as elusive truths are working against them. Finally, this turn comes close to a post-modern twist on reality, constructed in a double bind between the reader and a fictional text. “In fact,” says Benjamin, “the material of montage is not at all random.” Here one must recall Benjamin's comment on the role of Dadaism and its connection to daily life: “For the first time, if only tentatively, it [Dadaism] has proclaimed the sovereignty of the authentic. In its best moments, film has prepared us for it” (232). The novel, decisively marked by the principle of montage derived from cinema, was first published in 1929, just at the time silent cinema was coming to an end in Germany.⁵ However, Benjamin himself does not say anything about sound cinema and its potentials in this context, nor in any other context for that matter. Döblin's novel was prompted in fact by silent film, but it implicitly anticipated sound film because one virtually “hears” the vibrating whirl of the city when reading the novel. Therefore, as hinted above, mutual relations between the film and the novel include Döblin's signaling a lack of sound in moving pictures of the silent era.

Fassbinder's Alexanderplatz

It did not take very long after the publication of the novel in 1929 for the first film version of the novel to be shot. Based on the script by Döblin himself and with Heinrich George in the role of Franz Biberkopf, the film was directed by Piel Jutzi, most famous for the successes of one of the “proletarian” films in the Weimar Republic, *Mutter Krausens Fahrt ins Glück* (Mother Krause's Journey to Happiness, 1929). Although praised for its imagery of Berlin and especially the introductory sequence, in which Franz rides a tram after leaving prison, the ninety-minute film was widely considered inadequate in comparison to the “epic” proportions of the novel. Therefore, as much as the novel was generated in the world of cinema,⁶ there were obvious problems in transferring or “translating” the text “back” into cinematic format. In terms of the narrative, Jutzi's film was a montage of bits and pieces of the novel, but it missed the background of movement of de-montage through the entire novel.

Almost fifty years after this first attempt, Fassbinder's TV series *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1980) appeared. Yet, in view of the just vaguely dawning era of digital technology at the time, which later substantially altered television as a specific medium and introduced new modes of production and consumption of moving pictures, the format of the TV series still did

not perfectly conform to Fassbinder's ambitions or to his ability as film author. Although the TV series offered Fassbinder the needed time span to “tell the story,” the small TV screen at the same time represented a very serious impediment for him, and his disposition as a director of films meant for cinema screening worked against some rules of the medium. Therefore, the “lighting levels, judged too low for television” (Elsaesser 219) in particular were strongly criticized in the series after it premiered in 1980. Regarding the scope of Döblin's novel, it seems that the format of the TV series represented a transitional medium for visual reading of the text. It is no wonder that most serious authors that wrote and theorized about the series analytically and extensively also spoke about a “film” and not about a “TV show.” However, the framework of this paper does not permit commenting on some great interpretations of Fassbinder's *Alexanderplatz*, written by authors such as Kaja Silverman, Jane Shattuc, and Thomas Elsaesser.

In the film, Fassbinder made his “naive” reading an instrument of his own historicizing approach as well as an instrument of adapting the story to his “autobiographical” reading. On the other hand, he internalized the novel through two readings and let himself be conditioned by mechanisms of identification, especially declaring his own identification with the character of Franz Biberkopf. Thus, according to the form, the TV series was unintentionally anticipatory in pointing towards media that still did not exist, which opened a path to autobiography as communicable “style” of narration in the age of decomposed subjectivity at home in cyberspace. In any case, Fassbinder combined all of his experience in genre films (above all melodramas and gangster movies) into a montage that compulsively repeats Döblin's complex truth, including both a historical reminiscence as well as straightforward political prophecy. As far as montage is concerned, Fassbinder's approach is definitely much closer to André Bazin's concept, which favors Orson Welles' deep focus and depth of visual field to Eisenstein's montage of attractions. Indeed, his montage works through the motifs of the novel as *de-montage* combining other means of cinematic narration such as usage of darkness and light, compositions of particular pictures in continuity and discontinuity and—perhaps in this Fassbinder work more than in his other films—handling of sound. Thus Fassbinder's masterful TV series transforms Döblin's very particular narrative into a movement that joins spaces and times, language and society, and subjectivity and its negative reflection as a part of the “metaphysics of social circumstances,” to use Elsaesser's expression. Thenceforth, understanding becomes a politics of images and, consequently, a placement of the imaginary into the core of reality. In view of my quest, the most

important aspect concerns the drama of a shattered selfhood. Fassbinder's film therefore forms the character as a never-accomplished person; moreover, "... his identity is put to the test not according to the narrative transformations that confirm the hero in his full self-possession. Instead, the narrative 'empties' him, readies him for his complete merger with the social body" (Elsaesser 220). Here, de-montage is at work: it is operating Biberkopf's personality. Therefore, Fassbinder's reading of the novel is far from a passive grasping of the content; it is a kind of re-reading, which opens the novel to a new understanding; it makes the dimension of de-montage visible by taking a clear view on the impacts of capitalism within the protagonist's subjectivity. A psychoanalytical viewpoint, especially linked to women and gender studies, is somehow presupposed and probably consciously communicated by the film. The entire gallery of ruined personalities from the margins of society (thieves, pimps, prostitutes, etc.), with the central character of Franz Biberkopf, makes possible an abundant deciphering of the novel in psychoanalytical terms. Construction of sexual identities in the novel clearly exposes a connectedness between individual relationships and social repressions, otherwise visible in many of Fassbinder's films. In Fassbinder's presentation the main character consistently acts under the pressure of a compulsion of repetition, submission, and identifications through unequal exchanges in relations to others, as is shown and explained in detail in Elsaesser's book cited above. At the same time, Fassbinder's film points to shortcomings of psychoanalysis to transcend the boundaries of explaining individual trauma. It is perhaps one of those very special coincidences that his film came out at a time when at least the intellectual audience was widely sensitized by reading and discussing Deleuze-Guattari's *Anti-Oedipe*.

From the interesting viewpoint of gender studies, Fassbinder's TV series discloses a set of reasons for violence against women in this case not so much in merely simple patriarchal attitudes, but in the framework of such a system. Because Fassbinder made no secret of his views on the nascent neoliberal capitalist society as a path to a new fascism, his TV series quite visibly connects the libidinal economy to the capitalist economy. Therefore, no matter how constraining television as a medium functioned in the adaptation of the novel, Fassbinder made Döblin's implicit prophecy, describing the nascent fascist society at the micro-level of the lower layers of society in the 1920s, "functional" again, now signaling the transition from the welfare state to the economy of neoliberalism. Decentered subjectivity is forced to define itself in narcissistic terms and is prone to enter cultural reproduction schemes, which are based on ideological interpellations consisting of entrepreneurial spirit, the myth of individual

success, and celebrity appeal. This is reflected in Fassbinder's TV series through categories from the crisis of the late 1920s. Let me conclude by emphasizing that Thomas Elsaesser's analysis of the TV series goes further than most others exactly because it points out the perversion of the economy as it literally becomes visible in the film: "What under one aspect may appear as exploitation and the power to dictate the terms of a transaction is in another respect a form of enterprise, where acts of exchange require the materialist poetry of savage thinking, of wheeling and dealing, of the opportunist's quick response and the speculator's risk-taking" (232). Now the question remains open: can one expect yet another adaptation of Döblin's novel, which still resists total canonization and classification, let alone any ideological appropriation, in some previously un-imagined medium of moving pictures?

In the age of digital montage-collage

The principle of montage in pluralist settings in today's world of interplay between constructed realities operates not just through artistic practices, but through a whole complex of various communication, information, and presentations. "We recognize in montage this essential difference born from the principle of disappearance / appearance due to intermittence by the power of cutting to remove, eliminate and convoke, make occur" (Faucon 47). Here I am referring to the "principle" because cutting and gluing pieces of film or magnetic tape is increasingly a thing of the past, but with new technologies the notion of montage becomes much broader because interventions within single frames are possible in a manner in which traditional filmmakers could only dream of. Therefore, the case of *Berlin Alexanderplatz* could be taken as one of the early indicative appropriations of the practice of montage by the novelistic form and even more, as I have pointed out, as an introduction of the power of montage as de-montage. This, then, brings me back to Benjamin and his other immensely influential conceptualization of the culture of mass reproduction, which sheds some light on his view on Döblin—but also offers a paradigm for thinking about yet another change concerning the notion of perception within the framework of mass culture. In his book *Digital Baroque*, Timothy Murray suggests that "new media provides performance with an energy and excitement perhaps unparalleled since the advent of silent cinema. Spectators faced with the morphing shapes of holographic form and virtual reality are confronted with an artistic spectacle strangely similar in effect to that of the silent cinematic image described in 1927

by Antonin Artaud” (36). This gives Murray a pretext to suggest a new understanding of an increasingly important feature of contemporary art. Changes of modes of production within industrial civilization, which decidedly determined social and economic spaces, exposed a new relevance of the processes of producing an artwork. They propelled a range of different approaches to the reflexive impacts of representation (in a performance or in a literary work) of interactions between perception and objects generated in aesthetic practice. Digital technology is currently a last result in a whole history of the process, which started by combining science, industry, the capitalist economy, and various criticisms of signifying practices. Similar to photography, cinema, and video, this technology creates fascinating effects. Of course, Benjamin's epistemological break, as expressed in the notion of *aura*, still serves as an explanatory theoretical instance. Nevertheless, it seems that a change produced by digital technology requires much more than just a kind of quantitative comparison with the impact of mechanical reproduction. “To use a metaphor from computer culture, new media turns all culture and cultural theory into open source. This 'opening up' of all cultural techniques, conventions, forms and concepts is ultimately the most positive cultural effect of computerization—the opportunity to see the world and the human being anew, in ways which were not available to 'A Man with a Movie Camera'” (Manovich, *The Language* 333).

The advent of digital technology has had a huge impact on a wide range of conditions for production of visual representations in artistic and all other known senses, commencing already at the time of “analogue” television as a “mediatic *flow*,” in Raymond Williams' words (see especially chapter four of his book). The impact of ICT on the form of written documents, diverse genres, including aesthetically marked narratives, necessitates a rethinking of the relationship between literature and moving pictures, now appearing in many other shapes and on other ubiquitous screens than just on celluloid film and on silver screens in cinemas. However, one must take into account the fact that any thinking about this relationship already implies ongoing changes of both occurrences of culture: literature and the media. In new settings of communication, some forms and phenomena of (re)presentation with a vast number of combinations of means of narration have yet to be recognized as a kind of, say, literature or at least documents of reality within virtual reality and *vice versa*. As Manovich observes in his last book, software is at the center of these new realities and, by virtue of being used by hundreds of millions of people, software becomes “cultural software.” (In fact, compare the entire line of argumentation in Manovich, *Software*.) What one should

look for, especially considering the field of literature and new very “democratized” uses of moving pictures, are therefore not so much some very complex phenomena of so-called computer art, but mass usage of interactive media, within which some forms of narrating, taking different views, commenting, expressing anxieties, accumulating memory, playing with identities, and disrupting many notions of objectivity are taking place. In transcending the boundaries between text and pictures, and between static and moving pictures, narration in the digital media results from de-montage of reality, which becomes more real rather than a forever lost “external reality” by virtue of the virtual.

For example, the works of Sophie Calle, who invested much of her daily life in self-presenting her life's experiences through a de-montage of various media, writing, images, films, and outcomes of unusual communications, signaled a future—which is the present now—of wild hybridism and all kinds of narratives, accomplished through mixing different genres. I propose a slight addition to the notion of montage in the case of these new kinds of narratives, and I refer to them as *montage-collage*, which integrates opposite principles of montage and de-montage. The indicative case, which already causes some serious theoretical pondering, is a re-enactment of autobiography, preferably in the form of a diary. One such case is quite a complex internet site, which presents the *Journal d'Ariane Grimm*, consisting of pictures of written pages, small films, blogs, fiction and “auto-fiction,” and links the *Journal* to reflections on these activities by Philippe Lejeune (a university expert in autobiography).⁷ The site contains a true-life drama because the writer of the journals, Ariane Grimm, died in a motorcycle accident in 1985 and now her journals and a number of ongoing activities around them are managed by Ariane's mother, Gisèle Grimm. The case in point triggers an investigation into whether it is necessary to deal with some new literary form, perhaps another form of novel, a *montage-collage* that is named *Un roman de soi*. One might say that many Facebook users as well as users of some less popular internet-based social networks are already basically doing the same thing. The Facebook universe is a vast world of *montage-collage*, in which there is space for construction of diverse identities, for presenting real and totally invented stories of real or pretended “selves,” for unbridled narcissism, and for many other types of self-exposure. Dadaistic and *New sobriety* ideas of art joined to daily life come true in an unexpected media—probably not exactly in accordance with the original Dada idea. Even a trace of epic form could be detected, the epic of leisure time incorporated in the system of vast exchanges of imaginary attributes of objects as pictures, small films, and more or less irrelevant statements. Nonetheless, such media proved to be

a working tool in cases of the public unrest of the 2010s from Tunisia and Egypt to Greece, Spain, and Slovenia. One has to remember the iconic image of Brecht's musing face with just a tinge of smile.

Conclusion

Benjamin's diagnosis of the "age of mechanical reproduction," as one could say following Timothy Murray's logic, can be taken as a thought pattern that opens new venues of reflection on just what is being produced in the framework of reading and writing, looking, seeing, learning, and knowing. Curiously, another comparison between two periods—namely, the 1920s and 2010s—springs up: in the time of Döblin and Benjamin as well as in today's contemporaneity it is necessary to deal with a crisis, first of all political, economic, and financial, and also a crisis of art forms, considering that artists in all genres are searching for some new social relevance. The crisis, which appears in Badiou's terms as a surge of the *real* within reality, points in the direction of subjectivity, which inexplicably succumbs to forms of domination within a system, paradoxically based on the notion of freedom. Yet another transformation of forms of social life and culture is evolving, and so the citizen as a psychological subjectivity attached to literary and other kinds of narratives becomes not only decentered, but in Deleuze's vision also deprived of indivisibility in the form of an individual. Namely, at the dawn of the digital era in 1990, Deleuze wrote a prophetic article called "Society of Control," in which he detects a complex change in the social environment: from an environment of enclosure, as analyzed by Foucault, there is a transition to the *society of control* (here Deleuze is recalling Burroughs). An entire range of institutions faces a manifest crisis within the new mode of capitalism, which Deleuze labels *capitalisme de surproduction*. "Individuals have become 'dividuals,' and masses, samples, data, markets, or 'banks'" (244, English translation 3–7). Digital technology serves as a tool of society of control. An important aspect of Deleuze's assessments in this essay is a hint against techno-fetishism: "Types of machines are easily matched with each type of society—not that machines are determining, but because they express those social forms capable of generating them and using them" (244). What I am talking about here is a social form, within which a particular type of "non-personality" is forming. The formulae of life of this society contain a decomposition of what has been the incorporation of empirical subjectivity: the individual. Particular *dividuals* are now simultaneously citizens, actors, stakeholders, entertainers, immigrants, a combination of attributes and desiring con-

stituents, disposed and exposed to an abstract domination. *Montage-collage* is obviously a form of narrative, which, through de-montage of the flow of “real life,” is capable of articulating a morphing of bodies and its symbolic potentials. Hence, the Deleuzian concept of *dividuality* and its theoretical vision signals a scope of thinking within cyberspace—of course, not losing sight of past testimonies of decentered subjectivity, one which I found in Döblin's novel and its adaptations in moving pictures.

NOTES

¹ Some aspects of the results of my previous research on this topic were included in my presentation at the Eighteenth International Congress of Aesthetics in Beijing in 2010. The paper was subsequently published in a selection of papers (Štrajnc, Darko. **Counter-Identification and Politics of Art.** In: Lang, Ye (ed.). *Diversities in Aesthetics: Selected Papers of the 18th Congress of International Aesthetics.* Beijing: Chinese Society for Aesthetics, 2013, 115–126). Some quotes from Benjamin and some of my own verbalizations are re-contextualized and mostly re-formulated, further elaborated, and largely extended in this paper.

² The most common English translations of this movement's name are *New Objectivity* or *New Sobriety*.

³ This term was proposed and developed by David Henkin (see the reference list).

⁴ The idea for introducing the term *de-montage* in this context was suggested to me by Thomas Elsaesser when we discussed the topics of this paper before it was finished. Of course, the elaboration of the term is my own responsibility. I am also indebted to Elsaesser for numerous other suggestions and thought-provoking remarks.

⁵ Brockmann quotes the dynamic of the transition process to sound cinema at the time. “Some basic statistics on production show how quickly the introduction of sound film changed the cinema landscape in Germany: in 1928 Germany made 224 films, all of them silent. In 1929 Germany made 183 films, with 175 silent and 8 sound. The next year, in 1930, Germany made a total of 146 films, of which 100 were sound and only 46 silent. By 1931, Germany made only two silent films and the other 142 films were sound. Within two years there had been a total revolution in technology, and the silent film essentially disappeared from German production” (55).

⁶ Döblin's connections to the world of moving pictures were abundant and multifarious. From simply being a frequent and enthusiastic film viewer and also a writer of film critiques, Döblin's affinity to film also manifested itself in his professional activity in Hollywood while he was in emigration in the United States.

⁷ See <http://www.arianegrimm.net/pages/sommaire.html> (25 December 2013). My claim that this internet phenomenon raises interesting theoretical questions is based on an oral presentation at the Nineteenth International Congress of Aesthetics in Krakow (22–27 July 2013) on 25 July, 2013 by Okubo Miki: “The Actuality of Writing and the Mode of Self-Narrative.”

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Benjamin, Walter. “Krisis des Romans: Zu Döblin's Berlin Alexanderplatz.” *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 3, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1991. 230–236.

- Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." *Illuminations*, New York: Schocken Books, 1969. 217–251.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. *Méditations pascaliennes*. Paris: Seuil, 1997.
- Brockmann, Steven. *A Critical History of German Film*. Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2010.
- Caygill, Howard. *Walter Benjamin / The Colour of Experience*. London: Routledge, 1998.
- Deleuze, Gilles. *Pourparlers*. Paris: Les Éditions de minuit, 1990. (English translation: Postscript on the Societies of Control, *October*, vol. 59, Winter, 1992, 3–7.)
- Döblin, Alfred. *Berlin Alexanderplatz / Die Geschichte vom Franz Biberkopf*. Berlin: S. Fischer Verlag, 1929.
- Elsaesser, Thomas. *Fassbinder's Germany*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1996.
- Faucon, Térésa. *Théorie du montage*. Paris: Armand Colin, 2013.
- Henkin, David. *City Reading: Written Words and Public Spaces in Antebellum New York*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1998.
- Kleinschmidt, Erich. "Döblin's Engagement with the New Media." *A Companion to the Works of Alfred Döblin*. Eds. Roland Dollinger, Wulf Koepke, and Heidi Thoman Tewarson. Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2004.
- Manovich, Lev. *The Language of New Media*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002.
- Manovich, Lev. *Software Takes Command*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013.
- Murray, Timothy. *Digital Baroque / New Media Art and Cinematic Folds*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008.
- Williams, Raymond. *Television / Technology and Cultural Form*. London: Fontana, 1974.

Náčelo montaže in literatura: fragmentirana subjektivnost kot vsebina romana, filma in digitalnih form naracije

Ključne besede: literatura in film / montaža / demontaža / subjektivnost / Benjamin, Walter / nemška književnost / Döblin, Alfred / *Berlin Alexanderplatz* / filmske priredbe / Fassbinder, Rainer Werner

Prispevek izhaja iz Benjaminovega stavka: »Zaresna montaža temelji na dokumentu«. Zato začnemo z opredelitvami paradigmatskih presečišč, ki so nastala v okviru specifičnega srečanja med Walterjem Benjaminom in Alfredom Döblinom. Benjaminovo branje Döblina in pogled na njegov poglavitni roman *Berlin Alexanderplatz* v eseju *Krisis des Romans* se na zgoščen način gibljeta skozi – kakor bi lahko rekli danes – vrsto interdisciplinarnih področij, kot sta primerjalna književnost in kulturna analiza. Najpomembnejši vidik v našem branju je Benjaminovo pojasnjujoče povezovanje Döblinovega romana z logiko filmske produkcije, predvsem pa s pojmom montaže. Šele kasneje (leta 1980) ob Fassbinderjevi ekra-

nizaciji romana se izkaže, da je montaža v romanu hkrati tudi demon-
taža. Fassbinderjeva TV serija, ki temelji na romanu *Berlin Alexanderplatz*,
združuje avtorjeve izkušnje z žanrskim filmom (predvsem z melodramo
in gangsterskim filmom) z montažo, ki kompulzivno ponavlja Döblinovo
kompleksno resnico, vključno z zgodovinskim spominom in z odkrito
politično prerokbo. Tako mojstrska Fassbinderjeva TV serija preoblikuje
singularno Döblinovo naracijo v gibanje, ki spaja prostore in čase, jezik
in družbo, subjektivnost in njeno negativno zrcalno podobo v metafiziki
družbenih okoliščin. S tem razumevanje postane politika podob in posledično
umestitev imaginarnega v jedro realnosti. Te teme razumemo kot
predhodne artikulacije trans-formacij konstrukcij družbenih realnosti v
množični kulturi, ki v širšem smislu oblikuje polja prepletanja med per-
cepcijami, agensi in pojmi. Deleuzovski koncept dividualnosti in njegova
teoretična vizija kažeta na razsežnosti mišljenja v kibernetnem prostoru
glede na pretekla pričevanja o razsrediščeni subjektivnosti.

Januar 2014